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ABSTRACT

When children feel that they are among friends in their schools and classrooms, they make the school community their own. Using classroom vignettes and collegial conversations, this book illustrates the creation of caring learning communities in six elementary school classrooms. Part 1 of the book, "Four Keys to Classroom Community," focuses on strategies to foster caring relationships, including: (1) beginning the year with care, and helping children to know each other; (2) teaching humane values through establishing class norms with children, collaborative learning, spontaneous learning about values, and use of literature; (3) honoring intrinsic motivation through connecting learning to children's lives, usefulness, and community values; and (4) learning for understanding. Section 2, "Practical Tips from Teachers," presents suggestions for initiating changes in the classroom, including using familiar instructional formats even though the content changes; and forming groups, especially considering activity goals in group formation and group size and duration. This section also discusses challenges in incorporating collaborative activities in the classroom, including problem solving with children, when and how teachers should intervene, and adjustment of lessons for children. In addition, the section addresses coherence between the academic and affective goals for children, including teachers' ways of organizing instruction, relating to students, or conceptualizing the teacher role. The book's final section, on resources, includes an overview of motivation and learning theory, suggestions for community-building activities, a collaborative activity checklist, and excerpts from "Blueprints for a Collaborative Classroom" on interviewing and poetry formats for partner and group work. Contains 52 references. (Author/KB)

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